

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
AGRE-00 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9256

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0540

BANGKOK PLEASE PASS UDORN ELECTRICALLY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, EAGR, US, LA, WFP, UNDP

SUBJECT: LAO EMERGENCY FOOD AID

SUMMARY: ADJUSTMENTS IN LAO FOOD NEED ESTIMATES INDICATE
THAT THE SHORTFALL BEFORE THE NEXT HARVEST WILL BE
28,000 TO 31,000 TONS. THE SHORTAGE IN THE SOUTH IS
BEING FILLED TO THE EXTENT IT CAN BE. BY MID-AUGUST,
THERE WILL BE A SERIOUS NEED IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE.
AT THAT TIME, 10,000 TONS OF U.S. FOOD AID COULD BE
DELIVERED, STORED, AND CONSUMED. END SUMMARY.

1. CONVERSATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS WITH THE UNDP
RESREP AND WITH THE VIENTIANE-BASED WFP REPRESENTATIVE
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HAVE ENABLED US TO CLEAR UP SOME OF THE CONFUSION
SURROUNDING FOOD AID TO LAOS. WE NOW HAVE A CLEARER
IDEA OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND OF FUTURE PROSPECTS.

2. WITH REFERENCE TO ROME'S QUESTION (REF A) AS TO THE
NATURE OF THE 12,000 TONS "SLIPPAGE" IN THE RESREP'S
APRIL 5 ESTIMATE OF 92,500 TONS OF COMMODITIES PLEDGED

TO LAOS, THE FOLLOWING HAS COME TO LIGHT:

A. TWO THOUSAND TONS IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE ORIGINAL EXPECTATION THAT THE NORWEGIAN AND DANISH CASH GRANTS WOULD PURCHASE 8,000 TONS OF FOOD. PRICE CHANGES HAVE MEANT THAT THE MONEY WILL NOW ONLY BUY 6,000 TONS, AS REPORTED IN ROME 8378.

B. APPROXIMATELY 10,000 TONS IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE FAILURE OF SEVERAL DONORS, BOTH WESTERN AND COMMUNIST BLOC, TO PLEDGE AID. IT SEEMS EVIDENT THAT THE LAO HAD BEEN COUNTING ON CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH HAD NOT REALLY BEEN COMMITTED. THESE PHANTOM DONORS WERE LISTED AS "OTHERS" IN THE RESREP'S REPORTS OF APRIL 1 AND 5 (VIENTIANE 405, PARA 5).

3. WITH REFERENCE TO ROME'S QUESTION WHETHER THE 22,000 TONS NOW BEING PROCURED BY WFP ARE INCLUDED IN THE 92,500 TONS REPORTED AS PLEDGED BY THE RESREP (VIENTIANE 422, PARA 2): YES. HOWEVER, AS NOTED IN (A) ABOVE, THERE IS 2,000 TONS SLIPPAGE IN THIS AMOUNT, SO THE SHORTFALL NOT ONLY REMAINS, BUT IS INCREASED BY 2,000 TONS.

4. WITH REFERENCE TO THE DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR OUR BEST ASSESSMENT AS TO THE NEED FOR U.S. FOOD AID:

A. THE TOTAL NEED IN LAOS UNTIL THE NEXT HARVEST IS STILL ESTIMATED TO BE 112,500 TONS.
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B. THE SHORTFALL- COMPOSED OF A PRE-EXISTING 20,000 TONS PLUS 12,000 TO 15,000 TONS "SLIPPAGE" (PARA 2 ABOVE) IS 32,000 TO 35,000 TONS.

C. PART OF THE SHORTFALL CAN BE COVERED BY PLACING THE WFP'S FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAM UNDER AN EMERGENCY QUICK REACTION "Q" DESIGNATOR. THIS WOULD MAKE ABOUT 4,000 ADDITIONAL TONS OF FOOD AVAILABLE DURING THE EXPECTED SHORTAGE PERIOD. THE RESREP TOLD US MAY 10 THAT OUR REPORT (VIENTIANE 422) THAT IMPOSING THE "Q" DESIGNATOR COULD FILL THE ENTIRE SHORTFALL WAS BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING. ALTHOUGH THIS PROGRAM WOULD ULTIMATELY PROVIDE A LARGE QUANTITY OF FOOD, ONLY ABOUT 4,000 TONS COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE UNDER A REIMPOSED "Q" DESIGNATOR BEFORE THE NEXT HARVEST. THE RESREP SAID THAT HE WAS TAKING ACTION TO SEE THAT THE "Q" DESIGNATOR WAS REIMPOSED.

D. THE NET NATIONWIDE SHORTFALL IS THUS 28,000 TO 31,000 TONS (32,000 TO 35,000 TONS LESS THE 4,000 TONS GAINED BY REIMPOSING THE "Q" DESIGNATOR ON THE FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAM.)

E. THIS SHORTFALL WILL PROBABLY BE FELT MOST SERIOUSLY IN THE CENTRAL PART OF THE COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH

SOUTHERN LAOS CURRENTLY HAS THE MOST URGENT NEED FOR EMERGENCY DROUGHT AID. FOOD ALREADY DELIVERED OR PROGRAMMED TO BE DELIVERED TO THE SOUTH, HOWEVER, WILL NOT ONLY COME CLOSE TO FILLING THE REGION'S NEED BUT WILL PROBABLY ENCUMBER THE MUKDAHAN-SAVANNAKHET FERRY AND SAVANNAKHET STORAGE FACILITIES UNTIL THE NEXT HARVEST. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT NO MORE FOOD SHOULD BE PROGRAMMED FOR DELIVERY VIA SAVANNAKHET.

F. VIENTIANE HAS A TOTAL ESTIMATED NEED OF ABOUT 43,000 TONS. SIX THOUSAND TONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DELIVERED, LEAVING AN OUTSTANDING NEED OF ABOUT 37,000 TONS. THE NATIONWIDE SHORTFALL DESCRIBED IN SUBPARA (D) ABOVE WILL PROBABLY BE PRIMARILY EXPRESSED
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BY FAILURE TO FILL THIS VIENTIANE NEED. AMPLE FERRY AND STORAGE CAPACITY EXIST AT THE NON KHAI-THA NALENG CROSSING POINT AND IN VIENTIANE CITY WAREHOUSES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0540

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G. ACCORDING TO CURRENT SHIPPING SCHEDULES, THE SHORTFALL IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE SHOULD BECOME ACUTE AROUND THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST.

5. ACCORDINGLY, OUR CURRENT BEST ESTIMATE IS THAT U.S. FOOD AID WILL NOT BE NEEDED FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS, I.E., UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST. HOWEVER, AT THAT TIME 10,000 TONS OF U.S. PL 480 TITLE II FOOD AID COULD BE DELIVERED, STORED, AND CONSUMED IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE. IN ADDITION TO THE NEED BEING IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE, THE CHANCES OF PROPER MONITORING ARE GREATER (ALTHOUGH STILL NOT AS GOOD AS WE WOULD LIKE) IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY THAN THEY WOULD BE IN THE SOUTH.
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6. THE CASE FOR PROVIDING THIS U.S. FOOD AID IS STILL THREEFOLD: (A) GENERAL HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS, (B) REFUGEE PREVENTION, AND (C) DEMONSTRATION OF THE ADVANTAGE OF HAVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
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